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A Wonderful Morning



J. H. Snowden

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Irving A. West

A Wonderful Morning

By
JAMES H. SNOWDEN

A WONDERFUL NIGHT
THE PERSONALITY OF GOD
IS THE WORLD GROWING BETTER
THE COMING OF THE LORD
THE WORLD A SPIRITUAL SYSTEM
CAN WE BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY



A Wonderful
Morning
An Interpretation of
Easter

By James H. Snowden
Decorations by Maud and
Miska Petersham



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© Christ, whose cross began to bloom
With peaceful lilies long ago,
More thick the Easter garlands glow
Each year above thy empty tomb.
—Tennyson.

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Foreword



THE first Easter morning was the most glorious hour of history and has shed its radiance down through all succeeding centuries. The empty tomb of Christ turned his tragic cross into an effulgent crown and proclaimed him Lord of Life and Master of Death. Here at last is a visitor from "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns." Here is, not simply a whisper from the silence of eternity, but a clear strong voice; not merely a gleam for peering strained eyes but a gush and flood of light from the gates of the celestial city pushed ajar. The Wonderful Night with its Babe of Bethlehem is irradiated by the Wonderful Morning with its risen Lord. In the

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dawn of this day life takes on grand meaning and immortal hope, death is robbed of its sting, and the light and joy and song of it gild all our crosses and fill all our days. Let every sorrowing soul be comforted, and every fainting heart take courage, and follow the Captain of our salvation who hath marched to the gates of endless joy and opened them for our entrance. Plant a flower of hope on the grave: it "is the green mountain-top of a far new world." We join in the song of all the Christian centuries:

Now let the heavens be joyful,
Let earth her song begin;
Let the round world keep triumph,
And all that is therein;
Invisible and visible,
Their notes let all things blend,
For Christ the Lord is risen,
Our Joy that hath no end.
—*John of Damascus* (8th century).

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Introduction: The Significance of Morning



MORNINGS differ. They may all look alike on the calendar, but they are marked by wide distinctions in physical appearance and spiritual significance. Some mornings dawn in a rosy glow of pearly light and reach jeweled fingers up towards the zenith, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day and flooding the world with an opalescent sea of splendor. Other mornings seem to struggle blindly out of the dark, vainly endeavoring to tear off the swaddling bands of the night, and then go veiled in clouds and rain that let no gleam of sunlight slip through; or they are born in

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storm in which the earth seems to rock amidst thunder roar and lightning flash as if it were seized with a cosmic convulsion and were ushering in the day of Judgment.

Still more deeply do mornings differ in meaning. They generally unveil common days which have no special sign on the calendar; but here and there in the diary of history is a morning that is signalized with a red letter and designates a day of uncommon significance. These special mornings may be marked only on our private calendar and celebrate birthdays or other anniversaries. But there are also epochal mornings whose meaning the whole world knows and never can forget. Christmas and New Year's are the gladdest mornings of the year and roll waves of joy around the world, flooding all shores. The Fourth of July in America and the Fourteenth of July in France are national

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holidays that cause the hearts of these nations to throb with joy. The morning of the Eleventh of November will long be an epochal date as celebrating the signing of the Armistice by which the guns of the Great War were silenced and the angels of Peace spread their white wings over the world and sang again as birds sing after a storm.

Some mornings are ill-starred as marking fateful and tragic events. That was a dark morning which ushered in the day when the dagger of destiny was pointed at Abraham Lincoln and laid him low; that was a tragic morning which rose upon Waterloo and saw Napoleon fall as a star from heaven; and that was a fateful morning in history when Caesar lay stabbed on the floor of the Forum, staining its white marble with his warm red blood. The darkest morning earth ever saw dawned on "that green hill far

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away" on which stood sharply etched against the Syrian sky two crosses and between them another Cross.

But there are also bright mornings that shine as stars on the calendar of the centuries. That was a great morning which witnessed Abraham Lincoln sign the Emancipation Proclamation, and that was another epochal morning which heard Luther declare, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me!" There are mornings in history that are mileposts of human progress, monuments of victory in the onward march of mankind.

Judea is little among the countries and nations of the world, but it shines upon the map as a star or a cluster of stars of the first magnitude. The world owes it more than any other country and people that have appeared on the planet. It did not build a world empire after the manner of Babylon and Rome; it did not adorn its

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rocky citadel with glorious works of art, crowning it with a great white blossom carved in marble, and it did not speculate profoundly in philosophy, as did the Greeks; but it had prophetic vision to catch gleams of divine light and emblazon them upon inspired pages of literature whose leaves are now for the healing of the nations. It brought forth a Son who now shines as the supreme Teacher and Master of the world. It had spiritual genius that surpassed and has long outlived all "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome."

We have already looked into that Wonderful Night ¹ that marked one of the greatest epochs of all time, ushering in the day from which all other days are dated, the pivotal point and central axis of all history. We are now to look at the Won-

¹ *A Wonderful Night*, by James H. Snowden. The Macmillan Company, 1919.

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derful Morning that is a companion piece and complementary study. The Wonderful Night was the beginning and the Wonderful Morning may be taken as marking the end of the most Wonderful Life that ever was lived on this earth. This morning shines upon the calendar as a sun among stars and sheds its glory over all our days. It is the light of this morning that disperses the darkness from the Cross on Calvary and kindles it into a glow of light that transfigures it into a crown more splendid than all the jeweled diadems of earth. It was the morning of this day that sealed the divinity of our Lord, declaring him to be the Son of God with power. It was this epochal morning that opened the rocky jaws of the tomb, swallowed up death in victory and brought life and immortality to light.

II. The Trustworthiness of the Records



ISTORY rests on records. There must be places, monuments, writings, names and dates to which we can go and which we can see and handle and test as evidence on which we accept historic events. Myth and legend resolve themselves into shadowy origins that are as unsubstantial as mist and fog. They may be beautiful, but they are only bits of gorgeously-colored clouds. We cannot believe in such vanished dreams. Our faith must rest on fact. Rational religion refuses to drift around on a sea or float about in the clouds, and it demands that it be anchored and built on rock. We must have witnesses and records that have been tested and proved true, or we will put no faith in them.

The Wonderful Morning happened long ago. Nearly two thousand years have

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passed since this event took place and it is now far behind us in the dim distance. How do we know it happened? Is it also only another idle tale or beautiful legend? On what solid fact does it rest? This fundamental question will confront us from the beginning of this study, and we must face it fully and frankly.

There are certain documents in the case that will be much in evidence. These are the Four Gospels and the other books of the New Testament, chiefly the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul. They tell us the story of the Wonderful Morning over and over again, but what is their value? What has critical scholarship to say about them? Let us not be afraid to hear the answer.

It is, however, an obvious but important fact that these documents did not in the first instance create faith in the resurrection of Christ; it was just the other way,

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faith in this resurrection created these documents. This event was believed as a fact long before these records were written. The first believers in this event had no Gospels or any single bit of the New Testament. They had the fact as they had witnessed it, and then afterwards they wrote down what they had seen and heard and thereby transmitted their testimony to us. The Gospels and Acts and Epistles, then, float as bits of literature on the mighty current of belief and life that issued from the empty grave of the risen Lord. This current would have come down to us had no such books been dropped on its bosom, though no doubt in diminished volume and power. The documents do help us; but they did not create the faith that created Christianity, any more than the books that have been written about Niagara have created Niagara. Back of the books of the New Testament

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and infinitely greater than all these books is the tremendous Event that happened on this Wonderful Morning, and it is this revolutionary Fact that must be accounted for with a sufficient and worthy explanation and cause.

Nevertheless, we are still faced with the question of the trustworthiness of these documents. Did they originate long after the alleged event when the original witnesses had gone and time had elapsed in which legendary stories could grow up? Are they only second-hand reports and far-off rumors and faint echoes? This was not and is not at all the case. These records were written by eye-witnesses or by those who were associated with such witnesses, and these writers speak that they do know and tell us that they had seen.

Two of the Gospels, Matthew and John, are attributed to personal disciples of Jesus, two of the original Twelve who

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spent three years in the public ministry and private companionship of the Master. There is good reason for accepting them as the genuine writings of these disciples, and they are accepted by practically all scholars as having come either from them directly or from those who were closely associated with them. Mark is attributed to an associate of Paul and of Peter and has indications of being the earliest written Gospel and is accepted as a trustworthy authority. Luke and the Acts were written by a professional scholar and historian who traveled with Paul and was present with him at Jerusalem where he met James, the brother of the Lord (Acts 21:18), and thus he had opportunity of learning from eye-witnesses the facts as to the resurrection. Paul, whose principal Epistles are undisputed, was converted to belief in the resurrection of Jesus, whose name he was trying to stamp out in

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blood, only about a year after the event, and three years later he spent two weeks in Jerusalem with Peter and James and thus had direct access to the witnesses and facts in the case.

A short and convincing line of argument for reaching the dates of the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts is as follows: The death of Paul by martyrdom took place under Nero, who died in 68 A. D., Paul's death probably occurring in 64. Luke, the traveling companion and biographer of Paul, evidently wrote the Acts before the death of Paul, for had he written after it he would certainly have given some account of this important event. The Acts may be dated at about 62. Luke wrote his Gospel before he wrote the Acts, and his Gospel may be dated not later than 60. Both Matthew and Luke used Mark in writing their Gospels, as is evident from the fact that they follow the order of Mark and incorporate

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nearly all of his Gospel in theirs. Mark, then, may be dated between 50 and 60, so that the earliest Synoptic Gospel was composed within about 25 years of the death of Christ. Luke had still earlier gospels written by eye-witnesses in his hands, carrying the first written records back still closer to the resurrection and ascension. This line of reasoning and these dates have behind them the weighty authority of Harnack, a trustworthy historical scholar and impartial critic.

We are here anticipating points that will arise later in this study, but sufficient has been said to indicate that we are not following cunningly devised fables and legendary stories in accepting these documents, but are resting on historical records that have been subjected to the most searching and pitiless criticism, and in this light they stand as tested and trustworthy history.

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That there are variations in the records and testimony of the witnesses is true enough, and we shall consider these in their due place, but these are unimportant in comparison with their general agreement on the main facts and do not impair the substantial value and truth of their testimony.

III. Antecedents of the Wonderful Morning



THE mornings of human history are not disconnected and isolated events, like separated and scattered links, but are a causal succession forming a continuous chain running far back into the past and lengthening forward into the future. Events are never independent facts, but have deep roots and distant relations.

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Even the most sudden and violent irruptions are the result of slow-working forces. Niagara does not originate on its brink, but in springs thousands of miles back among the hills, whence its waters through weeks and months leisurely and sometimes imperceptibly gravitate towards its fateful leap. The meteor burns itself out in the twinkling of an eye, but through how many millions of invisible miles did it gather momentum for that brief flash of splendor. The mountain that for centuries was never suspected of being a sleeping volcano and then suddenly blows its head off in a monstrous explosion, has all the time been silently accumulating its confined forces, and it is the last pound of pressure that precipitates the catastrophe. Revolutions are always evolutions. History has its great crises and convulsions, but they are the culmination of long-accumulating events.

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The resurrection of Christ was a stupendous rupture of the ordinary course of nature, but it was a link in a long chain of divine purpose and human history. Prophecy prepared for it. Peter on the day of Pentecost appealed to David as having predicted the resurrection of the Messiah in the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm, in which he declared, "Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:25-31). There are few direct references to or hints of this event in the Old Testament, but the whole course and deepening gulf stream of Hebrew history and prophecy was heading towards a Messiah who would fulfil his mission only by triumphing over death and being crowned with eternal victory.

Jesus himself plainly and repeatedly predicted his own resurrection. "From that time began Jesus to show unto his

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disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matt. 16:21). Again and again did he predict and prepare them for this event.

Not only was the resurrection of Jesus prepared for and predicted, but it was a necessary part of his redemptive mission. It rescued the cross from everlasting ignominy and crowned it with glory and honor. It sealed his divinity and clothed him with power to quicken believers with newness of life and finally to raise their mortal bodies up in incorruptible glory.

The resurrection of Christ, then, was no accidental or unrelated or purposeless event in his mission, but was an essential link in his life, foreshadowed in prophecy, foretold by himself and foreordained from the foundation of the world. It was an epochal hour that was set in its place in the

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calendar of time by the hand of God himself.

Historic events are credible and capable of being proved very much in proportion as they fit into the frame of history as a key fits into a lock. If we were to read in a book that in the year 1000 A. D. men flew in an airship from England to America, we could not believe the account because there was no airship and America was not known at that time: the key would not go into the lock. We can read in ancient documents that Apollonius of Tyana rose from the dead, but nobody believes the story, not only because it is not supported by adequate evidence but also because there was no worthy reason why Apollonius should rise from the dead. He was not such a personality and so related to the ages as to make it necessary or probable that such an event should happen.

There were also circulated in that age

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many other stories of resurrections from the dead, which were generally believed and were accepted by Augustine and other church fathers, but in no instance is such a resurrection sustained by evidence that is definite, competent and trustworthy, and they are not to be classed or compared with the resurrection of Jesus and differ from it by a wide and deep gulf in rationality and historicity. They have on them all the marks of pious credulity and have long since passed into oblivion, while the resurrection of Jesus stands as a rock because it is rooted in historic fact.

Jesus Christ stands in a different relation. By virtue of his divine nature and birth and mission in the world it was fitting and needful that he should both die on the cross and rise again from the dead. The ages grew into readiness for him, and this event matches them as a key fits its lock. It is therefore a rational

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event, and this makes it antecedently credible and renders its proof comparatively free from difficulty. It was as logical and easy for Christ to rise from the grave as for light to shoot from the sun or for a seed to sprout out of the ground and burst into bud and bloom. This relation to history prepares us for this event, and it is in this light that we should see and consider all the records and evidences that support it.

IV. The Approach to the Morning



IN addition to the general preparation and plan that led up to and culminated in the Wonderful Morning, we must consider the special significance of the several days and nights that constituted the approach to it. Certain happenings marked these days that were the step-

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pingstones to this glorious consummation.

I. THE UPPER CHAMBER IN JERUSALEM

The whole of Passion Week was crowded with important events in the life of Jesus. About one fourth of the Four Gospels is concerned with these few days. On Tuesday occurred his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem that ended so disappointingly to the disciples. On Thursday evening he met with the Twelve in the upper chamber in the city to keep the Passover, which was then transmuted into the Lord's Supper to be observed to the end of time.

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread." On this critical night when enemies were gathering in the darkness to betray him, he did not seize a sword to slay them, or take any measures for his own defence,

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but he took bread. While enemies were plotting the means of his death, he provided the means of life. This bread and cup were the monument he left to be remembered by. How frail and perishable were the elements and yet how imperishable the memorial! Men have tried to perpetuate their names in marble shafts or great pyramids of stone or mighty empires, but the marble has crumbled, the very meaning of the pyramids has been forgotten, and the empires have gone the way of Nineveh and Tyre. But the bread and wine have come down through the centuries from hand to hand as a slender thread and are as fresh and vital in their meaning to-day as when they passed from Jesus to his first disciples. There is some precious meaning in this ordinance which the world will not let die, and that meaning is life more abundant and everlasting.

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2. THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Many gardens have been celebrated in history, some of them as places of beauty and pleasure, and others have been signalized by tragic events. Gethsemane is the world's Garden of Sorrow. The very name strikes sad minor chords in the memory, and it suggests agony and blood.

From the institution of the new ordinance of fellowship in the upper chamber Jesus with the disciples went over to the Mount of Olives, where he delivered his great Farewell Discourse, his earthly Valedictory. Then they passed on into the Garden and were lost in its shadows and dark depths. Here Jesus fought the real battle of the Cross. Gethsemane won the victory of Calvary. It cost him a terrible struggle to submit his will to the Father and drink his cup, the agony of his soul pressed drops of blood out of his brow,

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but out of the conflict he stepped calm and strong for the final fatal hour. He had taken his three most intimate friends with him apart from the others, that he might have the support of their sympathy, but they failed him and lost their last opportunity to help him. It seemed easier for Christ to bear his mysterious agony than it was for them to lose a night's sleep. Yet Jesus was patient with them in their frequent lapses and at last told them to sleep on. The Master's time of weakness and need of help was past.

3. THE TRIAL

The dark night broke on the morning when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, and he was hurried to his three-fold trial. The Sanhedrim, meeting in the morning twilight, hastily went through the form of a trial and condemned him and then sent him to Pilate for Roman confirmation

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of the sentence. Pilate was persuaded of the innocence of the false charge the priests and Pharisees and scribes brought against the strange prisoner, but he was a coward and, vainly trying to wash his hands of guilty complicity in the case, sent Jesus back to the Jewish tribunal. Through all the false charges and lying testimony of bribed witnesses and murderous malice and clamant voices of the Jews, Jesus maintained wonderful calmness and poise and peace. He stood as a white tower of purity and strength amidst all the fury and foam of their frenzied hatred. The verdict was a foregone conclusion, sentence was passed, and the Jews brought upon themselves the most tragic guilt and doom of history by sending their own Messiah to the cross.

4. THE CRUCIFIXION

On a green hill far away, outside the

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city wall, on a knoll of limestone rock that bore a striking resemblance to a human skull and hence was called Calvary, a fitting place for the scene, the great tragedy was enacted. Three crosses stood up against the sky, a thief on each side and Jesus in the midst. A jeering mob surged around the victims, Roman soldiers, rattling dice in their brass helmets, gambled for their clothes, and only several women friends and a single disciple of the central Sufferer looked on from a distance in silent sympathy and then drew near and received a farewell message from Jesus. The sight was terrible even for the stoutest nerves in that hard age, but upon that central Cross and pressing its mysterious pangs into its Victim there hung a burden of guilt and woe that no eyes in that crowd could see. There was being offered a divine Sacrifice for the redemption of the world. The mortal agony en-

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dured for several hours before death mercifully put an end to the scene. Crying "It is finished," Jesus expired. Something was finished of which the world little knew.

5. THE BURIAL

The body of Jesus was taken by Joseph of Arimathaea and by him wrapped in clean linen. Nicodemus, the same who came to Jesus by night, also appeared bringing spices. Having thus prepared the body for burial, Joseph laid it in a new tomb cut out of the rock in his own garden and rolled a slab of stone across its door. The priests and Pharisees, appealing to Pilate, had the stone sealed and a guard placed at the tomb so that, as they said, the disciples might not steal the body and then claim that Jesus had risen as he had predicted he would. The disciples had forgotten this prediction, but the priests remembered it.

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That Friday evening the sun set upon one more newly-made grave. No outward sign marked it as being different from all the innumerable graves that have pitted the bosom of the earth from the beginning of human history. The stars looked down upon it through that night as undisturbed and serene as they have ever been. Jerusalem slept untroubled by the tragedy which meant no more to it than any other execution. It was used to seeing Roman crosses sharply outlined against the sky on the neighboring hilltops. Rome itself was as unconscious of it as of countless other such incidents on the borders of its far-flung domain. Neither Jew nor Gentile had any premonition of what was impending. Saturday morning dawned and slowly rolled the hours through another day and into another night and again the stars shone out and the morning of the third day drew near, and still there was no

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slightest stir in that tomb. Was this the end? Where was Christ? Had the poet's mournful lines come true?

Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

This is just what the disciples literally and undoubtingly believed. They had no other thought. At the arrest of Jesus they "all left him and fled," and were in hiding. They had "hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel," but now their dream was dead. It was all over. Back to the boats!

Ye poor deluded youths, go home,
Mend the old nets ye left to roam,
Tie the split oar, patch the torn sail.
It was indeed an "idle tale"—
He was not risen!

V. The Wonderful Morning Dawns on an Empty Tomb



AD nothing happened in that tomb, nothing would ever have been heard of Christ, and of Christianity which would have been buried in the same grave with his body. Had it been so, the world would be a vastly different world to day. But something did happen; something of tremendous and overwhelming power and purpose disturbed that tomb and changed all history.

Tombs differ in significance. Men differ as widely in their death as in their life. In some graves sleeps dishonored dust, and over others angels keep watch. The great tombs of the world are centers of attraction and draw visitors for widely varying reasons. The world turns towards Lincoln's grave with peculiar reverence and love, but it stands around the

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marble balustrade encircling Napoleon's sarcophagus with feelings of awe tinged with a sense of the shadow of dread he threw over the globe. The graves of Shakespeare and Milton, and of Dante and Michelangelo all have their special meanings.

What is the distinctive mark upon the tomb that stood in Joseph's garden on that Sunday morning nineteen hundred years ago? Through the grey twilight several women approached it, bearing spices that they might anoint the body of their friend, the dead Jesus. They were wondering who would remove for them the stone from the door of the tomb, but on arrival they found that this had been done. An angel of the Lord, amidst earthquake shocks had rolled the stone back, and the women entered the tomb. What did they find? "They entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." The tomb was *empty!*

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This was the distinguishing mark of that grave. Other graves are visited and cherished by sorrowing friends or honored with worldwide distinction because of what they *do* contain, but this grave is the center of the world's faith and hope because of what it did *not* contain. Its emptiness is its unique and supreme honor and glory. This was the first wonder of that Wonderful Morning which then broke upon the world.

The empty tomb is no unimportant incident in the narrative, something that we can loosely hold and lightly give up as immaterial to belief in the resurrection, but it is the initial link in the chain of evidence on which all other links depend, the very fountain of this fact. No other event of this Wonderful Morning is more emphatically pushed out into prominence and more clearly supported.

Neither the women nor the disciples had

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any other expectation than that they would find the body of Jesus in the tomb, and so they could have had no thought of inventing any story of the empty tomb or of removing the body in order to start such a tale. Though the disciples of Jesus had utterly forgotten his prediction that he would rise again, yet his enemies remembered it and took measures to prevent the theft of the body by sealing the stone on the grave and setting a guard over it. And such a fatal blow to their cause was the fact of the empty grave that when the priests and elders discovered it, they bribed the guard to start the story that the disciples came by night and stole the body, thus originating the first false theory of the resurrection of Jesus and at the same time confirming the reality of this event.

All the narratives agree that the women
“found not the body of the Lord Jesus,”

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and that the angel told them, "He is not here, but is risen." When they spread the wonderful news Peter and John ran to the sepulchre and found it empty, John (20:7) noting that the head-band was "rolled up in a place by itself," a graphic touch of an eye-witness and also a word which may imply that this cloth still retained its annular shape, as though the head had slipped out of it without disarranging its form.

Paul also believed in the empty grave. His statement "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4) clearly implies that his body was raised, leaving the tomb empty. In this statement the declaration that "he hath been raised" is coördinate with the declaration that "he was buried" and is to be taken in the same phys-

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ical sense. Even so radical a critic as Schmiedel admits this, saying: "That Jesus was buried and that 'he hath been raised' (I Cor. 15:4) cannot be affirmed by any one who has not the reanimation of the body in mind."

All efforts to break this first link in the chain of evidence for this fact have failed. The belief in the empty tomb cannot be derived from Jewish prophecy, or from Oriental myths, or from the expectation or desire or invention of the disciples. The fact of this belief is indubitable, and the only way to account for it is by the reality of the event itself. There stands the empty tomb in Joseph's garden near Jerusalem as a well attested historical fact, and it is a convincing and eloquent witness that the crucified Christ who was buried in it also came out of it and was no more holden of death.

VI. The Appearances of the Risen Lord



HE Wonderful Morning dawned on a day of tremendous excitement among the disciples in Jerusalem. They had been panic-stricken and dispersed, all their hopes were wrecked and all their dreams were dead, but with the first rays of light on this morning the report spread among them that their Lord was risen! This astonishing and incredible news upset and distracted all their judgments and turned the world into confusion around them so that they could hardly believe their own senses; and this fact is reflected in the language of the narratives which tries to express their state of mind by such words and phrases as "affrighted," "amazed," "terrified," "idle talk," and "great joy." This excitement may be a factor in explaining the fragmentary and disconnected and more or less confused

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accounts of these days, which were not calmly composed as continuous and complete history, but were impressionistic memories of that Wonderful Morning, each Evangelist selecting those incidents which made the most vivid impression on his own mind, or which were best suited to his purpose.

I. THE WOMEN AND THE ANGELS

To the grave on that morning came the women, the ones mentioned by name being Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna. These same women were last at the cross and now they are first at the tomb. Woman has most deeply felt the attraction of Jesus and has been foremost in devotion to him. This is an honor to both Jesus and woman, witnessing to his purity and nobility and manliness and to her spirituality and faithfulness. His gospel has blessed her in

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all ages and lands, striking the unequal burden of social wrong off her back, lifting her out of degradation and crowning her with equality with man in worth and nobility and freedom of soul. And she has shown her appreciation of his gospel by living it in her life and sending and carrying its light and healing to all lands.

The Wonderful Morning had a worthy setting at the tomb. An earthquake rocked it, and angels, clad in dazzling white, rolled back the stone from its door. As angels hovered over the cradle of Jesus and filled the night sky with their minstrelsy at his birth, so they appeared at his tomb to throw open its door and let the women enter, announcing to them, 'Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said.'" And so the first word that issued out of the empty tomb of Jesus was, "Fear not!"

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How appropriate and significant! The tomb is a place we fear perhaps above all other places in the world. It is dark and damp and seems a narrow, cabined, confined chamber of horrors. Ghosts are thought to lurk around it and hide in its dreadful depths, and there the last great enemy does his fearful work.

The very thought of the grave is enough to make cold sweat start from the brow of the timid. But out of this empty grave came the cheerful greeting, "Fear not." This was the first note of the angel's song at Bethlehem, and now it is the first note at his empty tomb. The gospel comes as good news to dispel all our fears and it has kept this tonic note all the way through. Sin has thrown us into such disharmony with God and the spirit world that we are afraid to have heaven come near to us, and the angels as they approach us must cry out, "Fear not."

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“He is not here.” The grave was no place for him after his work was done and he had extracted the fangs of death and accomplished his triumphal victory over it. “For he is risen, even as he said.” He had said it and now he had fulfilled it. Things had a habit of coming to pass “even as he said,” and so will they keep on unto the end. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his words shall fail.

2. THE APPEARANCES IN JERUSALEM

Jesus was risen, but no human eye saw him rise. The empty tomb at first was the only visible confirmation of the angels' announcement. This fact has been urged as an objection to the reality of this event, but it is rather a corroborative feature in the narrative. If deception or invention or vision or myth had had any part in weaving this story there would have been

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no lack of witnesses on this obvious point. It is easy to furnish testimony on any particular in any desired degree of abundance and explicit detail when it is all supplied by the imagination. The fact that no eye-witness of this event is adduced is confirmation of the honesty of the record. It presents no such witness because there was none to present.

No one saw Jesus rise, but many saw him risen. There is no lack of witnesses on this point. The first person to see the risen Lord was Mary Magdalene, who met him near the tomb and did not know him. As she was weeping, "Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew,

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Rabboni; which is to say, Master.” She did not at first recognize him because of the dim light or his changed appearance and did not even recognize his voice when he first spoke; but when he addressed her as “Mary!” the familiar tender accent was in his tones and she instantly knew him. She turned towards him as if to touch him, but he dissuaded her, for the time for the old familiar ways was past and he now sustained to her a new exalted relation as he was about to ascend on high. She was bidden, however, to go with a message to the disciples, and she went and told them, “I have seen the Lord.” All these first witnesses were hurried off to tell others the good news, and this is still the mission and the message of those who know this glorious fact.

At about the same time the other women, from whom Mary Magdalene seems to have become separated, for they

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all came to the grave together, as they were on their way back from the tomb were met by Jesus, and they exclaimed, "All hail!" and clung to his feet in worship. They received from Jesus the same message the angels had given them, "Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

When the disciples heard the story of these women their "words appeared to them as idle talk," or "nonsense," as the Greek word means, and the men would not believe them. Here were the first unbelievers in the resurrection of Jesus. This fact shows the state of mind of the disciples, making it psychologically impossible that they should have invented or imagined this event; and it also shows the naïve honesty of the narrative that enters this damaging fact upon the record in all its nakedness without any effort or

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thought of hiding or smoothing over its adverse impression upon the mind of the reader.

In the afternoon of the same day two disciples were going out to the village of Emmaus. They were engaged in earnest conversation. What about? There was only one subject on everybody's lips that day. Jesus fell in with them, but they did not recognize him. He asked them what they were talking about, and "they stood still, looking sad," struck motionless and silent with mournful astonishment at such a question. Was he a stranger in that city that he did not know the things that had happened there? What things? the Stranger persisted in asking. The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word, whom the chief priests and rulers condemned and crucified. "But we hoped," they pathetically added, "that it was he which should

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redeem Israel." But an amazing thing had happened: certain women had reported that they found the tomb empty; "but him they saw not." This conversation admirably reflects the bewildered state of mind of these disciples, vacillating between the hope that the wonderful news might be true and fear that it was false.

Then Jesus took the matter in hand and explained the Hebrew prophecies as foreshadowing these very things. As the little group drew near the village the Stranger seemed on the point of going on, but the two disciples invited and urged him to stop with them, as the day was declining. They sat down together at the evening meal, and as the Stranger took the bread and blessed it and gave it to them, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." In great haste the two disciples

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hurried back to Jerusalem and found the Eleven and others assembled and saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then the two disciples told of their wonderful experience and how "he was known to them in the breaking of bread." The story of this third appearance "is one of the most beautiful and felicitous narratives in Luke's Gospel" (24:13-35), and it has on it the inimitable marks of reality and truth.

While these disciples were thus assembled and "the doors were shut, for fear of the Jews," "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." But "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had beheld a spirit." Jesus endeavored to calm and reassure them, showing them his hands and feet and even asking them to handle him, "for," he said, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." But "they

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still disbelieved for joy, and wondered," and then he asked them if they had anything to eat and he himself partook of a piece of broiled fish as visible proof of the reality of his presence. Thomas, one of the Twelve, was absent on this occasion, and when the other disciples reported to him that they had seen the Lord, he declared, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe."

Eight days later there was a second meeting of the disciples in Jerusalem, and Thomas was present. Again "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." He then personally addressed Thomas, bidding him to reach forth his hand and put it into his side, and said, "Be not faithless, but believing." Then the deep and inveterate doubt of Thomas suddenly and completely gave way, as a dam bursts

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before a flood, and he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." Jesus saith unto him, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." This conversation between Jesus and Thomas is perfectly natural in the circumstances, and it is not such as would have been invented.

These five appearances all occurred in or near Jerusalem, the first four of them on the day of the resurrection, and they are definitely described. It is also mentioned that the risen Lord appeared to Peter on the same day (Luke 24:34), and Paul says (I Cor. 15:7), that "he was seen of James," making in all seven recorded appearances at Jerusalem.

3. THE APPEARANCES IN GALILEE

The scene now shifts to Galilee where two appearances are recorded. The first

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one was to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. They were out in their boat, having fished all night without any result, when a Stranger appeared on the shore and called to them, asking if they had anything to eat. When they answered, "No!" he told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, and when they were not able to lift the net because it was swollen with fish, John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter leaped into the sea and swam ashore, the others followed, breakfast was prepared, and Jesus gave them of the bread and fish. Then followed the searching but tender interview between Jesus and Peter. A special authentication is appended to the account of this appearance, stating, "This is the disciple which beareth witness to these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true."

The second appearance in Galilee was

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to the disciples and probably to the "above five hundred brethren," whom Paul mentions (I Cor. 15:6), on a mountain "where Jesus had appointed them." Here was given to the disciples the Great Commission, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20), which is one of the greatest if not the greatest utterance that ever fell from the lips of the Son of God.

A convincing note of truthfulness in the narrative of this appearance is the statement: "And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted." Only an honest historian who was simply telling the truth would have admitted into his account this unfavorable fact that

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“some doubted.” A writer with a partisan bias or purpose would have omitted this damaging acknowledgment and given a contrary impression. Imagine a paid attorney or perfervid political orator expatiating on such a case: he would have made it out that everybody worshipped and nobody doubted; the worship was absolutely unanimous! “But some doubted,” calmly and boldly says Matthew, and thereby puts on his narrative a seal of verity that never would have been invented and that cannot be broken.

We cannot be sure about the chronological order of these appearances at every point, and we do not know that these nine were the only appearances of the risen Lord. But these were enough to make sure of the fact. However, there was one more, in some respects the most important of all.

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4. THE FINAL APPEARANCE IN BETHANY

We have come to the closing scene; and it is worthy of its place as the conclusion and climax of this wonderful Life. Had the story of the resurrection of Jesus been an invention or myth, it would have been a hard matter to know how to bring his life on earth to an end. Christ was risen and his work was finished: what shall be done with him? He must not be permitted to die again, and he cannot remain. The critical point in a story is the conclusion. It must keep up the interest to the end and close at the highest point, or it breaks down and fails. How shall this life, that opened with angel minstrelsy in the skies and was attended with many wonderful works and has just emerged from the tomb and been crowned with the wonder and glory of the resurrection, be brought to an appropriate and worthy conclusion? What

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novelist or poet or painter would dare attempt such a task? But give the pen to one of these humble unlettered followers of Jesus and he will write a conclusion that is a fitting culmination and climax to the whole story, and that, viewed simply as a piece of literature and work of art, is one of the most perfect and beautiful things in all the books of the world. How simple and natural it is, how free from all art and effort, affectation and self-consciousness, how true to reality! The man that wrote the story of the ascension of Jesus, we feel, did not invent it and never thought of inventing anything. Nobody invented it, it was fact, the disciples simply related it, and here it is:

And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into

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heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God.

Who can gild that gold, or paint that lily, or throw a perfume on that bit of literature? It is art surpassing art, simply because the writer had no other purpose than to tell what happened on that day at Bethany when the risen Lord made his farewell appearance to his disciples and was parted from them and carried up into heaven. He came under the power of a higher gravitation and was loosed from the bonds of earth and rose into the clouds and disappeared in the spiritual world. His whole life had been an ascent. He ever grew in heavenly life and loveliness. His very cross only lifted him to a loftier point of glory, closer to God. He could climb no higher on earth. It was perfectly natural, then, that the next step would carry him up into heaven; he simply

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went to his own place, back to his native country. And so this final appearance put a seal upon his whole mission on earth as finished and sent him back to his heavenly home. Divine worship was the proper attitude towards and tribute to such a Person, and it has widened down through the centuries and is making the world vocal with his grace and glory to-day.

5. THE RESURRECTION BODY OF THE RISEN LORD

A mysterious change transformed the body of Jesus as he came forth from the tomb. His resurrection was not simply the reanimation or resuscitation of the crucified body, but a transformation into "another form" and higher powers. It was, first, a physical body in that it retained the general form and organs of the human body and presented the same general appearance. It was not a mere

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phantasm or ghostly apparition that flitted and flashed before the vision, but a corporeal reality that could be seen and handled and felt. It even had "flesh and bones," although it is significant that the usual expression "flesh and blood" is not used of it. Its continuity or identity with the former body was indicated by the print of the nails in the hands and the spear-mark in the side. More striking and surprising still, on one occasion Jesus partook of broiled fish in proof of his bodily reality.

Yet, on the other hand, it is made just as plain in the narratives that the resurrection body of Jesus was different from the normal human body. He seems to have slipt out of the tomb before the stone was rolled from its door, and twice it is recorded and noted as a strange thing that he appeared in the midst of the disciples in a room in Jerusalem "when the

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doors were shut." He thus transcended ordinary physical conditions and could pass unhindered through solid walls. It is further stated that on several occasions he was not at first recognized by his friends, and so great was the change in his person or so 'strange was his appearance that they were "affrighted and supposed they had seen a spirit." He appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus "in another form," and after he had revealed himself to them "he vanished out of their sight;" he did not simply withdraw from them, but suddenly and instantly disappeared.

There are thus two aspects or sets of descriptions of his bodily appearance after his resurrection, and they are so different that some have endeavored to array them against each other as two contradictory traditions. But the disciples and Evangelists were conscious of no such contradic-

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tion; both aspects were true impressions made on them and they excited in them no sense of incongruity.

There were prophetic foreshadowings of such bodily possibilities in Jesus before his resurrection. His walking on the sea of Galilee was a kind of levitation that counteracted gravitation, and his Transfiguration was a momentary release of the effulgence of his divinity that was temporarily held under leash or kept dormant, but when unloosed flooded him with splendor; and both of these manifestations were hints and gleams of what he might become.

Paul also both in his experience of the risen Christ and in his teaching on the nature of the resurrection body throws light on the problem. He saw Jesus at his conversion, yet as a heavenly vision that caused a light to shine out of the noonday sky. This vision, however, was

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no subjective illusion or objective apparition, but was regarded by him as a real bodily manifestation of the same nature as the appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. He also taught that the body that is sown at death is "not the body that shall be," but as in the case of the seed and the flower "God giveth it a body even as it pleased him." "So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . . If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

Putting all these facts together we are led to the probable conclusion that the resurrection body of our Lord was in a degree both a physical and yet also a spiritual body, partaking of the nature of both and adapted to the transitional world or condition through which the risen Christ was passing. He was still of the earth and yet was not altogether earthy, and he was already heavenly and

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yet was not completely heavenly. If he really ate food and was nourished by it, it is difficult to think that he was yet fully clothed upon with that immortality which "flesh and blood cannot" inherit. He could at will transcend the physical laws of the world, and yet was partly subject to its conditions. He was partially transfigured, but he had not yet fully disrobed himself of his earthy vesture so as to let the full radiance of his glory envelop him in splendor. He still had in some degree to accommodate himself to the carnal state of his disciples. The transition to the full spiritual and glorious body may have been effected at his ascension when "he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." We cannot well think that he floated off among other worlds and traveled through cosmic space, for this conception is too materialistic and earthly. Rather he vanished into the spiritual

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world where flesh and blood cannot enter, and his fleshly incarnation, already partially transformed at his resurrection, was then finally transfigured into the glorious body of his eternal manifestation.

VII. The Credibility of the Witnesses



WE have in these numerous witnesses a considerable body of testimony to this event. The Eleven, who were chosen disciples and became official witnesses, the women, certain other disciples, above five hundred brethren at one time, these all saw the risen Lord. One or two persons might be mistaken, but we have a record of the testimony of upwards of six hundred people. Let us scrutinize their credibility.

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I. GENERAL MARKS OF TRUTHFULNESS

First, there are certain general marks of truthfulness in their testimony. The stories they tell are characterized by sobriety and realistic description. The witnesses are not unbalanced in their minds and incoherent in their speech. They do not tell of ecstatic visions and spectacular happenings, but of plain matters of fact. None of the stuff of legend and myth is woven into their narratives. Jesus appears to them mainly in normal human form and behavior, though possessing some extraordinary powers. The things that almost certainly would have been pushed into prominence in an invented story or myth are conspicuous by their absence. Facts are recorded which would have been carefully glossed over or suppressed in a partisan account or fictitious story. For example, why is it stated

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that the risen Lord was not at first recognized by his own intimate friends? Because this is what happened. Why, again, do we read that he appeared only to friends and never to an enemy? A writer of fiction would have made him appear to Pilate and Caiaphas and the Pharisees, overwhelming them with confusion. Why do we not read of such appearances? Because they did not occur. Why do we find written down on these pages the immensely damaging facts that the disciples at first disbelieved and ridiculed the reports of the resurrection as incredible and absurd, and that even at the last when he appeared to five hundred worshippers "some doubted"? Because these things did happen. Partisan advocates, as we have already noted, would have represented that all the disciples immediately believed and that nobody doubted, but these writers did not say such things

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because they were telling the simple truth.

The outstanding fact of these narratives is that they have none of the inevitable and inescapable marks of imagination and myth, invention and legend, vision and ecstasy, which are careless of order and system, causes and consequences, and unmindful and unconscious of contradictions and impossibilities as they weave all sorts of incongruities and absurdities into the subjective fabric of desire; these witnesses do not lose touch with the earth and take to the wings of fancy; on the contrary, due allowance being made for the supernatural event they are relating, they keep down on the solid ground of sober reality and concrete details, follow the necessary connections of things, and observe the order and unity and harmony of normal human experience and historic fact. In a word, these narratives have

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all the simplicity and artlessness of truth, and these inimitable signs of veracity are so many seals authenticating the testimony of these witnesses.

2. THE WITNESSES ARE COMPETENT

Second, the witnesses are competent. They knew Jesus. They had lived with him during three years in daily companionship and were perfectly familiar with his appearance and voice and manner. They saw him crucified and dead on the cross. There could be no doubt about his death, for to make sure of it a soldier had thrust a spear into his side. Two of the followers of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, had taken his body and with their own hands had prepared it for burial and laid it in a tomb and rolled a great stone over its door. The disciples remained in Jerusalem after the burial and were on the ground when this event took

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place. They thus had direct knowledge of the facts in the case. They tell us that they saw the risen Jesus and that they tested their knowledge of him. It is not hearsay evidence and rumors they report to us. They do not tell us what others saw or said or believed, but what they themselves saw and knew. It is the testimony of their own tested eyesight and hearing and touch that they give us. And it is such testimony extended through forty days. Jesus was not simply flashed before them like a ghost. He did not appear before them only once or twice. He was not seen at a distance only. But he was with them repeatedly through a period of forty days in which he talked with them, walked with them, ate before them, and submitted himself to every physical test of his reality.

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the grave, these men must have known that

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he did not; and if he did rise, they knew this fact. If any human beings were ever in a position to know the absolute truth in this matter, they were; and therefore they are competent witnesses.

3. THE WITNESSES AGREE

Third, the witnesses agree. We have five different accounts of this occurrence in the New Testament given us by the four Evangelists and the Apostle Paul. They all differ from one another, but these variations, when the most is made of them, are not serious, much less fatal, discrepancies and contradictions, but admit of explanation. For one thing, these writers are not composing a systematic and complete history of this event, and are not even trying to arrange and set forth the facts so as to prove it, but are only giving personal experiences and impressions from their different points of view. And hence

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we have only disconnected incidents and fragments of the entire story, and it is not surprising that we cannot put these broken pieces together so as to make them fit around their ragged edges when other parts are missing that would complete and harmonize the whole.

For another thing, these differences in general are such as ought to be found in independent accounts. If all the witnesses related the story in precisely the same way, this would throw suspicion on them all as having been in collusion. No two men will tell their experience of an event in just the same way and words. While they tell substantially the same story, yet they will differ in their point of view and shading and emphasis, one relating an incident that another omits, or setting it in a different light. These individualistic variations in the form of testimony are one of the strongest indications of truth-

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fulness. It is mostly such differences that exist in the testimony of these witnesses. It is not strange that some of them have more vivid recollections of the appearances of the risen Lord in Jerusalem and others put the emphasis on his appearances in Galilee. They may differ widely and apparently seriously at such points and yet all be telling the truth, which fuller light would make plain to us. There is such substantial agreement among them that we feel sure of their testimony as to the main fact.

4. THE WITNESSES ARE TRUSTWORTHY

Fourth, the witnesses are trustworthy. What has been already said bears on this point, but we may develop it further. These witnesses were men of sanity and sound judgment. While they were not learned men or skilled lawyers, yet these hard-headed, shrewd fishermen were men

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of immense common sense. They were slow to grasp the spiritual teachings of Jesus, but they were not easily deceived on plain matters of fact.

Let us also keep in view the important point that they were not expecting the resurrection of Jesus, but were bewildered and crushed by his death and therefore were not in a state of mind to be deceived by some dream or vision that he had risen. In fact they were the first sceptics of this story and scoffed at it as "an idle tale." It was hard to convince them of it, and only when the risen Lord appeared amongst them and shewed them his hands and feet and ate before them would they yield to the evidence of their senses. Thomas held out for eight days and was convinced only by a physical demonstration. These men gave up their utter unbelief and accepted this fact only after they were forced into faith by

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irresistible evidence and could not do otherwise.

These witnesses could not have been deceived themselves, and they had no motive for attempting to deceive others. They had nothing to gain, from a worldly point of view, by their belief in the resurrection of their crucified Master, but everything to lose. This faith greatly exasperated the hatred of the Jews against them. Almost immediately they met with the bitterest and the bloodiest persecution on account of it. Yet they persisted in declaring their knowledge of this event and not one of them ever retracted it. Finally, they sealed their testimony with their blood. Only one disciple escaped a martyr's death. They were put to death because they testified to the fact of the resurrection of their Lord from the dead. Men will die to maintain an opinion which they believe to be true, but they

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will not die to support an alleged fact which they know to be false.

The direct evidence, then, for the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the testimony of witnesses who are numerous, competent, substantially in agreement and trustworthy.

VIII. The Testimony of the Apostle Paul



AUL was a Hebrew university graduate and lawyer and influential rabbi in Jerusalem, and also a Roman citizen. Born in Tarsus in Asia Minor, he was bred in Greek culture and could quote from Greek literature. Three civilizations, Hebrew, Greek and Roman, thus met and mingled in his blood. He was a man of acute and powerful intellect, of logic all compact, yet of poetic and fiery tempera-

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ment, a keen thinker and forceful writer who could sound the depths of philosophy, or let loose his thoughts on poetic wings, and an intense orator who could put the spell of his eloquent speech on vast audiences. Many-sided, variously-gifted, unspotted in character, deeply religious, terribly conscientious, tremendously in earnest in his convictions and volcanic in his emotions, adventurous and masterful as a pioneer preacher and missionary, absolutely devoted to his cause and brave unto death, he was one of the great men of his age and has helped to shape all the Christian centuries. Such was the man who is the weightiest single witness to the resurrection of Christ.

I. AUTHENTICITY OF HIS EPISTLES

We step on solid ground when we reach Paul, for the first four of his Epistles, in the order in which they stand in the New

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Testament, are practically undisputed among scholars, not meaning by this statement to cast any uncertainty upon the genuineness of his other Epistles. We are just as certain that Paul wrote Romans, I and II Corinthians and Galatians as we are that Cicero wrote his letters, or that Macaulay wrote his. Letters, it need not be said, are considered to have special value as historical evidence, as they are generally written with no partisan purpose and usually allude to contemporary events in a casual and incidental way.

When were these letters of Paul written? Paul was executed under Nero, who died in 68 A. D., and therefore Paul wrote these letters before this date. There is good reason for carrying their date back from ten to twelve years earlier to about the year 56, and I and II Thessalonians, Paul's earliest letters, are to be dated about 50. The crucifixion of Christ took place in the

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year 30. We then have letters of Paul that were written within twenty years after the death of Christ.

2. WHAT HIS EPISTLES PROVE

Now what do these letters show and prove? They prove that Paul believed that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Paul had been a powerful and bitter opponent of Christ and a bloody persecutor of all his followers. He believed with all his intense conscientiousness that Jesus was a heretic and the most dangerous man in the world. He was going around breathing out slaughter against his name and determined to stamp it out in blood. But these letters show that he had been turned squarely around in his attitude to Christ, and this profound change had been caused by his belief in the risen Lord. He now believed in the reality of this resurrection with all his mind and heart. It filled

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him with enthusiasm and immense energy. Inspired by this great fact he went forth to preach the faith he had once sought to destroy and with it to convert the world. He preached it in the intellectual centers of Europe, in Athens and Corinth and Rome. He suffered unparalleled hardships and sufferings and persecutions for it, and at last sealed his testimony to it with his life. If ever there was a man who believed that Christ rose from the dead, that man was Paul. Some conclusive evidence and overpowering fact must have wrought this change in this man of masterful mind, deep convictions, intense emotions and resolute will who had been so thoroughly committed and fiercely enraged against Jesus. No unsubstantial subjective vision or foolish fear or self-interest could have effected this total reversal in his mind and life. Only the sudden and certain knowledge of the fact

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of the resurrection of Christ could cause and explain this wonderful conversion. This is his own explanation of this radical change which he repeatedly sets forth with particularity of detail and accumulation of evidence and positive asseveration. And he gives this testimony under a solemn sense of his responsibility to God and to future generations. He knows that he is giving evidence in the court of the centuries and the amphitheater of the world. This witness is under oath to tell us the truth. "If Christ hath not been raised," he declares, "Yea, we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ."

Not only so, but Paul boldly stakes the whole gospel on the resurrection of Christ. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain" (I Cor. 15:14). If this fact stands solid and secure, it is the central column

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that holds up the whole structure of Christianity; but if it falls, everything goes crashing down with it. The Greek mind found it difficult to believe in a resurrection, and there were Greek converts in Corinth who denied the possibility of it. They wanted to receive the gospel of Christ and be saved by him, and yet deny his resurrection. But Paul cut the matter short by showing them that this was impossible. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." No resurrection means no Christ, and no Christ means no salvation. Thus this event was no unessential and incidental fact in Paul's faith, but it was for him the very core and heart of the gospel.

3. HOW DID PAUL KNOW?

But how did Paul know this fact? He was not on the ground as a personal

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witness at the time, and we do not know that he had ever seen Jesus in the flesh. Is he not simply reporting the hearsay evidence of others? No, Paul left no such fatal gap as this in his knowledge and testimony. We are to remember Paul's state of mind as a bitter and bloody persecutor of those who dared to believe in the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and he tells us several times what it was that changed his mind. This event was burnt into his consciousness and was the glowing center of his life. On his way to Damascus, breathing out slaughter against Christians, a light shone out of the sky, and he heard the voice of the risen Lord Jesus (Acts 9:1-9:22:6-11; 26:12-18). He narrates this event again and again. In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, in enumerating the witnesses who had seen the risen Christ he concludes with himself: "Last of all, as to a child un-

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timely born, he appeared to me also." He ranks this appearance along with the others as of the same nature and reality. It was not a subjective vision but an objective fact. He based his Apostolic authority on the fact that he had "seen Jesus our Lord" (I Cor. 9:1), and we have seen that his language in I Cor. 15:4 shows that he believed that Christ had "been raised on the third day" in the same sense in which "he was buried." The attempt to make it out that at his conversion Paul had only a subjective vision of Christ cannot be carried through. He heard a voice and instantly asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" and received the answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And a little later Barnabas said unto him, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight" (Acts 9:4-5, 17). Paul

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always treated the resurrection of Christ as a resurrection of his body out of the grave. A spiritual resurrection or a survival of the spirit after death would not have surprised much less offended the Athenians when Paul was addressing them on Mars' Hill, but as soon as he declared that God "hath raised him from the dead," his audience was in an uproar because it would not listen to the doctrine of a bodily resurrection.

Paul, then, speaks not simply as one who had heard from others the story of Christ's resurrection, but as one who had seen the risen Lord himself. And it was this appearance that converted him, instantly and totally stopped and reversed the rushing torrent of his impetuous life and sent him forth the most powerful preacher of the gospel of the resurrection the world has ever seen.

But this is not the whole of Paul's

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testimony. In the first chapter of Galatians, an undisputed Epistle, he tells us that three years after his conversion, having spent these years in retirement and meditation in Arabia, he went up to Jerusalem and spent fifteen days with Peter and with James the Lord's brother. Now Paul was converted soon after the resurrection of Christ; Harnack says within one year after that event. Since Christ was crucified in the year 30 A. D., Paul then believed in the fact of his resurrection possibly only a year after it happened, and three or four years after the event he spent fifteen days with Peter and James in Jerusalem. What did Paul and this disciple and brother of the risen Lord talk about during those eventful fifteen days? About the resurrection of Christ, among other things, beyond a doubt. In fact, we may say that Paul spent these two weeks investigating this case on the ground

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where it happened, examining and cross-examining the eye-witnesses and getting first-hand knowledge of it. When he tells us in Gal. 1:18 that he "went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas," he uses a word, translated "to visit" in the Revised Version which means "to know by inquiry and personal examination" and "implies a careful and searching inquiry." Schmiedel again acknowledges: "During his fifteen days' visit to Peter and James, Paul had the best opportunity to perfect his knowledge on the subject in the most authentic manner." In I Cor. 15:5-7 Paul tells us that the risen Christ was seen by Peter and James. He must have got this information from these men themselves during this visit with them. We are thus brought into contact with these two important witnesses and, through Paul, have their testimony to this event.

Furthermore, Paul in this same chapter

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declares that the risen Christ was seen by five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive at the time he was writing. Would he have dared to make such a statement as this unless he knew it was true? If it had been false, how easily it could have been refuted! and how surely would this have been done by Paul's enemies who were trying to discredit him and catch him in some fatal trap?

And thus these undisputed Epistles not only give us the personal testimony of Paul who had the fullest means and the most urgent motives for finding out the truth, but also carry us back to the eye-witnesses of the risen Lord. When we consider the great ability of Paul as a thinker and trained lawyer and his deep-seated prejudice and powerful opposition against Christ and especially against the doctrine or alleged fact of his resurrection,

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and then consider what a tremendous and overwhelming weight of evidence must have been necessary to convert him to belief in this event, we may feel that we may safely rest this question on his direct and unimpeachable testimony. If we had no other evidence than that of this supremely great and honest and weighty witness, we could have confidence in the fact.

IX. The Witness of the Apostle Peter



WITHIN seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus we find Peter preaching this fact in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. The narrative (Acts 2:1-42) not only has behind it the general trustworthiness of the Book of Acts and of Luke its author, but it also has internal marks

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of truth. It is written in a primitive style that is free from indications of reflection and growth, and Peter's speech especially is original and artless and has the air and tone of sincerity and reality. He appealed to his hearers, who were Jews, as having personal knowledge of the life of Jesus, "as ye yourselves know." He then based his message on the fact of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus: "whom God raised up," "nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." There can be no doubt that Peter preached the bodily resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to large numbers of Jews within a short time after this event when the witnesses of it were still present. Peter himself was one of the principal eye-witnesses who had personal knowledge of it. Paul in his list of witnesses (I Cor. 15:5) specially mentions Peter. That this fact should

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thus be preached as the very foundation of the gospel within so short a time on the very ground where it happened by so conspicuous a witness as Peter, is a strong link or strand in the proof by which this event is established.

X. The Establishment and History of the Christian Church



ANOTHER line of evidence leading to the proof of the resurrection of Christ is the establishment and history of the Christian church.

I. THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHURCH

What was the condition of Christ's cause or church immediately after his death? It was utterly dead and buried in the same grave with its Founder. Let us

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recall again the state of mind of the disciples after this event. Scattered and crushed, they had no hope or thought of restoring this cause. They had trusted that Jesus had been he who would have restored Israel, but now he was dead and all was lost. Never were the followers of a leader so completely stopped and rendered helpless and hopeless by disaster as were these men by this tragedy. But within three days after the terror of the crucifixion, we see these same disciples suddenly aroused from their paralyzing despair and filled and energized with marvelous faith and courage and might. They immediately reorganized the church and began to extend it with wonderful power. What was the secret of this mighty change? It could have been no act of conscious deception or fraud on their part, for no men could arise out of their depth of despondency and preach, as did these

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men, so powerfully with a lie on their lips. It was no dream or vision that floated through their imagination, for this was psychologically impossible in their state of mind. It was no myth or legend that grew up and was woven about the Master, for there was not time enough for this. This great change occurred within three days. Had any considerable time elapsed after the death of Christ before any such turn took place in the current of affairs, his church, which was only a little handful of disciples loosely held together, would have been scattered and have left no recorded syllable on the page of history. The only adequate explanation of this revolution in the minds of these men is the one they themselves give, that Christ rose from the dead. The moment this fact penetrated their consciousness it took hold of them with an irresistible grip and inspired them with almost superhuman

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courage and power. It made men of them. It saved the church of Christ. This event was the veritable resurrection of his church as well as of Christ himself. The disciples, having themselves been delivered from despair, immediately seized the church, as its wreckage was about to float off on the stream of time, and planted it on the rock of the resurrection, and there it stands to this day.

2. THE SPREAD OF THE CHURCH

The disciples started out towards the four corners of the earth declaring the glorious fact of the resurrection of Christ and basing the gospel upon it. The apostolic churches were all built on this fact. Within twenty-five or thirty years after this event there were Christian churches in Antioch and Ephesus and Corinth and Rome. They were rapidly encircling the Mediterranean shore. What

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did these churches believe? These undisputed Epistles tell us: that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. There were members in some of these churches that were believers in this fact before Paul himself believed it; and there were still living many who had seen the risen Lord. All these believers and all the churches everywhere rested their faith on the fact that Christ rose from the dead. This was the dynamic that created Christianity and launched it upon the stream of time. And so down through the centuries the church of Christ has come with widening sweep and accumulating power until to-day it has swept around the globe; and that which not only started it but also has given it persistency and victorious momentum and might has been a profound belief in this resurrection as an historical fact. Take away this fact and faith and Christian history has no adequate explana-

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tion. Nineteen centuries of splendid Christian achievement would hang suspended on nothing. And were the church of Christ to abandon faith in this fact to-day, it would lose its supernatural foundation and power and wither into a natural ethical cult.

3. THE ARGUMENT FROM CAUSE

Events must have causes. As a stream flows by us we know that somewhere it had its origin and that if we trace it back we shall find it issuing from some distant spring. The Christian church is a mighty gulf stream flowing through the centuries. We trace it back century by century and finally year by year until we reach the very fact out of which it issued; and this fact is the resurrection of Jesus Christ; a fact that is a fountain deep enough and broad enough to give rise to this stream; and nothing else is such a fountain.

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As we approach the origin of this stream we are not involved in uncertainties and vagueness; we are not landed in a swamp or enveloped in a fog; but we reach definite facts, definite authenticated writings, definite dates, and definite men speaking as eye-witnesses and giving solemn and decisive testimonies. The stream proves the existence of the spring, and the spring explains the stream.

Monuments are incontestable evidence of historic events. How do we know that Washington lived? Because we can go to the city that has been named after him and place our hand on the magnificent marble shaft that has been reared to perpetuate his fame. How do we know that there was such a battle as Bunker Hill? Because we can go to the field where it was fought and stand before the monument that was raised to commemorate it. How do we know that Titus captured Jerusalem?

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Because we can go to Rome and look upon the noble arch that was erected to signalize his triumph and on it we can see the carved figures of the Jews that he captured. How do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Because we live in the very presence of the mighty monument of Christianity that overshadows the plain of all the Christian centuries, and this was not built on a fraud, a delusion or a myth, but on a fact; and that fact can be nothing else than that Christ rose from the dead.

4. MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

The resurrection of our Lord is thus attested by many infallible proofs. "This thing was not done in a corner," but in the full light of day. No other miracle or critical event in the Bible is pushed out into such publicity and surrounded and supported with so many and so varied

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lines of proof that converge in one luminous center and glowing and glorious fact. God left no uncertainties hanging around it to throw doubt upon it, no mists to obscure it, but placed it on a rock in the broad light of history. It is vital to our faith that we know this fact and that we know it beyond a reasonable doubt, and divine Providence placed upon it the seals of many witnesses and of many corroborating circumstances, so that we can join with the accent of conviction and sincerity in the most ancient creed of the church: "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose again from the dead."

(The judgment of the eminent historian and famous headmaster of Rugby, Dr. Thomas Arnold, is justified; said he to his boys in his school: "The evidence of our Lord's life and death and resurrection

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may be and often has been shown to be satisfactory. It is good according to the common rules of distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece, as carefully as ever judge summed up in a most important case. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others, but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

XI. The Person of Christ



THE converging lines of evidence we have been considering all come to their burning focus in the person of Christ. His resurrection reflects power and glory upon his person, but his person contributes rationality and probability, if not certainty and necessity, to his resurrection. These arguments might fail to convince us if they were alleged of an ordinary human person, but they gain appropriateness and weight and conclusiveness when applied to the extraordinary person of Christ.

I. THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

As we consider Jesus as he lived his human life, we are at once attracted by his sinlessness. Among the sons of men, all of whom without exception are more or less stained with sin, he only walked

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in unspotted white. He had the power to sin, and the suggestions and allurements and storms of temptation beat against him, yet he resisted them and kept himself pure, even as the sunlight keeps itself unsmirched by the murky atmosphere through which it slips and the slime on which it falls. Christ himself was free from any consciousness of guilt, and he boldly challenged his enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and none of them ever met the challenge. Modern critics have fared no better in his presence. On the contrary, some modern sceptical scholars have joined in the eulogy of Christ as a perfect character. David Strauss, who reduced Jesus to the level of his human kind, yet said that he had "a consciousness unclouded by the memory of any sins," and John Stuart Mill declared, "Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this Man as the

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ideal representative and guide of humanity." The sinlessness of Christ is a moral miracle that lifts him out of his human kind and crowns him with a glory that is divine.

2. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

Sinlessness is the negative side of the character of Christ, of which the positive side is perfect holiness. His character is compacted of all virtues raised to their highest power and beauty. Purity, patience and peace, truth and trust, honesty and honor, righteousness and reverence, goodness and gentleness, kindness and courtesy, sympathy, service and sacrifice—all virtues combined in him into a perfect disposition, the one flawless diamond and supremely beautiful character that has ever appeared among men.

A striking and difficult feature of his

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character is its symmetry. Character is a complex and delicate fabric and is easily thrown out of proportion and balance. It may be strong in one direction and weak in another, highly developed in one faculty or virtue and dwarfed in another, and thus may be ill-proportioned and misshapen. Christ stands supreme and unique among men as the one perfectly balanced man, having all elements of character blended into harmony and making a full-rounded personality. Complementary virtues such as clear cold reasoning and warm emotionalism, a rich inner life and an active outer life, and apparently contradictory virtues such as justice and mercy, stern integrity and sweet reasonableness, deep personal convictions and patience and charity towards the convictions of others—these and many other complementary graces Jesus combined into balanced harmony and unity,

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and thus he is the one perfect pattern of humanity, "the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely."

Another striking feature of his character is its universality. Every human being is born and grows within the envelope of his age and race and country, and never wholly escapes these limitations. But Jesus is the universal Man. He is the Son of Man, the typical and representative, the ideal and perfect Man who is equally at home among all the sons of men. His character is bounded and dwarfed by none of the peculiar limitations of any particular race, but has that breadth and balance, poise and power, that make it the model and paragon of all races; it is compounded of all virtues and graces mixed and blended in perfect proportion. And so age can never wither him or custom stale his infinite variety. He speaks on

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universal themes in immortal words that will never grow old and can never lose their perennial music and charm. He draws to his side the men of every race in affection and trust, devotion and service. Compared with him the greatest geniuses are local characters and parochial schoolmasters. He looms over all the world as the one universal Man who typifies humanity and is at home in all ages and lands and among all peoples.

3. THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

“A Teacher come from God,” was the judgment of a great Jewish doctor of divinity upon Jesus, and the centuries have accepted this verdict and turned the world into his amphitheater in which the nations are listening to his gracious words. The manner of his teaching was artless, simple, sincere, coming as a living stream out of his own experience, appeal-

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ing to the experience of his hearers, and throbbing with sympathy and earnestness. He taught with authority, but not with the arbitrary authority of official station. The authority that clothed his words was that of inherent and self-evident truth. His words were their own witnesses and needed no official claim or station to confirm them.

Universality was stamped upon his character. His subjects, however personal and local, were yet universal in their range and application. The smallest matter in his hands became great. He kept clear of local and temporary affairs and dealt only with the large and permanent interests of the human soul. The teachings of any ancient author, even the greatest, such as Plato or Cicero, are obsolete in many a page, because they have long since been left behind by the progress of human thought. Science has

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put them in a pitiable plight. But none of the teachings of Jesus is thus out of date and left behind. His words are ever abreast and in advance of the age, for they express universal truth; and still his sublime saying stands true, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

But the teacher is always greater than his teaching, and this is supremely true of the divine Teacher who is himself his greatest message: his truth is our trust, and his love is our life. This is why in the Epistles of the New Testament there is so little use made of the teachings of Christ recorded in the Gospels. No allusion is made to the Sermon on the Mount or the parables which we think are so precious and vital. Hardly ever is Christ quoted, but his person is adored; the reflected light is disregarded because the gaze is fastened on the Sun; his sayings are

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forgotten, but Christ himself is all in all.

4. THE MISSION OF CHRIST

The mission of Christ was to carry out the purpose of the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. He did not do the things that great men usually try to do: he did not write a book, or paint a picture, or found a school of thought, or start a political party, or build an empire. He simply went about mostly among the people in fishing villages and along the country roads, telling them of the love of God and manifesting and applying it in feeding the hungry and healing the sick and forgiving the sinful and penitent. He worked miracles, but these also were incidental manifestations of mercy and love. He disclosed his

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hidden glory for a moment in his transfiguration, but he quickly turned that great white splendor on the mountain top into a shining stream of healing down on the plain. He preached no cheap and easy gospel, but his cross was the supreme sacrifice he made for the redemption of mankind. Though he carried on his earthly work in an obscure corner of the world, yet he had world wide plans and purposes. His horizon was the rim of the planet, and his redemption embraced humanity. He did not strive nor cry and was the quietest man of his day, yet tranquil and gentle forces are ever the mightiest, and he was letting loose influences that would turn the world upside down and transform all the ages.

5. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

The outstanding fact about Jesus Christ is that he cannot be construed simply as

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man or purely as God, but can be understood only as a union of both. His humanity is seen in his physical body and rational soul, and in all points he was subject to human conditions. But his divinity is equally with his humanity displayed and demonstrated in the Scriptures. Not only his pre-existence, but his eternal existence is affirmed. Divine names are freely applied to him, and divine attributes and actions are undoubtedly ascribed to him. Words that would be terribly blasphemous or would indicate insanity if spoken by a human person, fall from his lips as though they were perfectly natural to him, and are accepted as such by his disciples and by succeeding ages. He forgives sin and expressly declares that this is an exercise of divine power. He speaks to man as God, claims divine worship from man, and declares that he will judge the world. The whole New

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Testament is saturated with the divinity of Christ. We can scarcely read a line of it without encountering some act, statement or allusion relating to him that is absurd if he be conceived under human terms, and yet his person retains its sanity and consistency and its hold upon the Christian world. All lines of teaching and testimony in the New Testament converge upon the exclamation of the Roman soldier at the crucifixion, "Truly this man was the Son of God": a scene that drew from the French sceptic Rousseau the well-known saying, "If Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ died like a God."

6. CHRIST IN HISTORY

Christendom is Christ writ large. It dates its calendar from his birth and organizes itself around him as its center. The Christian centuries are his lengthened

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shadow. This fact is a tremendous proof of his divine personality and power. He said he would be with his followers in making disciples of all nations even unto the end of the world, and the world is slowly but surely showing that this promise is being fulfilled. It is true that there are yet many black blots and broad shadows on the world; it is still in the twilight or in the dark. But the Sun has not yet fully risen; it has only swung above the eastern horizon, and long time must elapse before it can ascend to the zenith and flood the world with midday splendor. But the dawn has reddened the East and given promise of the day. Standing in the frame of these nineteen centuries Jesus Christ is seen to be larger than any figure of our human kind and to be crowned with divine majesty and might.

Such was the person who is shown by these evidences to have risen from the

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dead. Again we say that the person of Christ prepares the way for his resurrection as a natural and necessary completion of his mission and work. The evidences prove his resurrection, but he also proves the evidences. This event came out of him as naturally as a stream out of its fountain or as light out of the sun. It is easy to believe in these evidences when we see Christ himself and believe in him. They answer to his person and fit into it as coins match the die. His supreme personality calls for a unique entrance into and exit out of the world. However difficult and impossible it might be to prove the resurrection of an ordinary mortal, the proof becomes rational and convincing in the case of Christ. It was not possible that he should be holden of death, and he rose from the grave as its mighty conqueror and stepped forth in the fullness of his own eternal life.

XII. Inadequate Explanations



IN considering a question it is always well to listen to the opposition. There is generally some truth in every side of a subject, and opponents of our view may have found a fragment of truth we do not have, or caught a glimpse or aspect of it we have not seen. Their view may supplement ours or strengthen it at points and thus give us a larger apprehension of the whole truth.

This question of the resurrection of Christ has been under investigation from the very morning on which it happened, and it has come down to our day with unabated interest and is still being subjected to the most searching and pitiless inquiry. These centuries of debate have not been fruitless, but have yielded some sure results. They have not proved this event so as to preclude honest difference

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of opinion, but they have cleared the ground of irrelevant questions and of some untenable views. We are not to be surprised at unexplained difficulties, and every scholar knows that there are "unsolved remainders" in the problem that still perplex us. But these are not serious burdens on our faith.

There is now practically no doubt that the disciples and first Christians did believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This sure belief forced upon them against their scepticism was the irresistible dynamic that raised them up out of their despair and clothed them with victorious power. Belief in this fact rises like a mountain wall in the fourth decade of the first century, and out of its base issues the spring of the church that became the Gulf Stream of the centuries; it casts the mighty shadow of Christianity that has stretched broadening down to our

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day. The problem is to account for this wall of belief: it stands there as palpable and immovable as a wall of granite. How did it arise? What force, human or divine, upheaved it like an Alpine range? Every possible attempt has been made to explain it, to show how it arose, or to break through it, or batter it down.

I. OBSOLETE EXPLANATIONS

Already some answers to this question have had their little day and have become obsolete. One is the theory that the disciples removed the body of Jesus from the tomb and then spread the report that he had risen. The idea of such a theft occurred to the Pharisees, as we have seen, and they took steps to prevent it by having Pilate place a guard at the tomb. But the theory is absurd because the disciples were not expecting or thinking of a resurrection of their crucified Master, and

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so they never would have gone about such a piece of deception. The "fraud theory" has long since been consigned to its grave, where it lies buried without hope of resurrection.

Another explanation that is now obsolete is the theory that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but only fainted from loss of blood and exhaustion, and then revived in the tomb and came forth. But the Roman soldiers saw to it that he was dead, and a wounded and exhausted man, who had just recovered consciousness after the terrible ordeal of crucifixion, could never have made the impression on the disciples that Jesus did. This "swoon theory," as it is called, has also been abandoned and lies buried in the same grave with the fraud theory.

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2. MODERN THEORIES

Modern theories nearly all are of a psychological nature. The "vision theory," advanced by such critics as Renan, holds that the disciples had such an intense desire and yearning to see their Master returned to life that they had a subjective "vision" of him or mental hallucination that they had seen him, and so they came to believe, honestly enough, that he had risen and returned.

An able representative of this view is Paul W. Schmiedel, Professor of New Testament Exegesis in Zurich, Switzerland. He writes as follows: "Appearances of the risen Jesus did actually occur; that is to say, the followers of Jesus really had the impression of having seen him. The historian who will have it that the alleged appearances are due merely to legend or to invention must deny not only the genuine-

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ness of the Pauline Epistles but also the historicity of Jesus altogether. . . . The earliest accounts of the resurrection arose simultaneously with the occurrences to which they relate. . . . It is fully to be believed that men had the impression that they saw in full reality the wounds which Jesus had received on the cross, or perhaps even perceived that he showed them. The form which men beheld must of course show the most complete resemblance to that which Jesus bore upon earth, and to this, after the crucifixion the wounds . . . necessarily belonged. . . . From the nature of the appearances as described, it is further quite possible that they occurred even when the witnesses found themselves, as John 20:19-26, shut in with closed doors." This radical critic concedes so much that we may wonder why he does not go the full length of accepting these appearances, which he

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says "did actually occur," as the personal presence of the Lord risen from the tomb; yet he immediately resolves these appearances which "did actually occur" into the subjective vision that "the followers of Jesus really had the impression of having seen him." Their "impression" therefore was unfounded and was "really" false, and on this view Christianity rests on the hallucination of some Galilean fishermen. Schmiedel's theory of "appearances" that "did actually occur" so that the followers of Jesus "had the impression of having seen him," and even "saw in full reality the wounds which Jesus had received on the cross" when "they found themselves shut in with closed doors," involves almost as much supernaturalism and as many difficulties as the simple acceptance in their literal sense of the facts of the resurrection as they are told. But men who reject supernaturalism in one form may

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unwittingly accept it in another form that is more difficult to believe.

But the vision theory in all its forms goes to pieces on the rock of the mental condition of the disciples. Such a vision or hallucination requires a previous belief and expectation as its psychological condition, and the disciples had no such belief, but were in despair and refused to believe in the event when it was reported to them, and this renders the theory practically impossible. Besides, a hallucination or "vision" is necessarily an individual experience and not the common illusion or delusion of a group.

A variation of this story was proposed by Keim to the effect that while the body of Jesus did not emerge from the tomb, yet his spirit sent "telegrams" or supernatural manifestations to his disciples, assuring them that he still lived, and that they mistook these manifestations for the

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actual appearance of their risen Lord. But such "telegrams," if they were sent, were not true, for they told the disciples that Jesus in his bodily form was risen from the tomb, which according to the theory was not the fact.

It was to be expected that those who believe in communications from the dead would frame an explanation of this event, and the "psychical research theory" has been devised. Sir Oliver Lodge, the eminent scientist who is also an ardent advocate of the genuineness of spirit communications, maintains that the narratives of the appearances of the risen Lord are substantially accurate records of psychical experiences on the part of the apostles. But it is difficult to see how this interpretation can be forced upon the facts of the records. If taken in any literal and historical sense, these narratives cannot be turned into psychical experi-

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ences, much less into spirit communications.

One of the later explanations advanced is the "mythological theory." Myths of dying and rising gods were widespread in the ancient world, and they were supposed to typify the death of vegetation in the fall and the resurrection of the spring, and it is held that the story of the resurrection of Jesus was only a Jewish form of this myth. But it seems impossible to connect the resurrection of Jesus with any such mythology, because of the historical literalness of the narratives, which is at the farthest remove from mythological invention, and because the Jews abhorred pagan gods and all their ways and a "dying god" would have been an impossible conception to them, and therefore they were immune from infection from this source.

Attempts have been made, as by Pro-

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fessor William Sanday, to drop the supernatural resurrection of Christ and yet retain its spiritual significance. It is held that we may give up the empty tomb and bodily resurrection and yet hold on to the fact and the value of Christ's endless life. But this appears to involve a practical impossibility. We cannot abandon the fact of the resurrection and still have its value. As it took the fact of this event to start Christian faith, so will it take this fact to keep this faith going. Trying to keep the faith after giving up the fact is like trying to keep the tree with its fruit after severing it from its root, or to keep the light after putting out the lamp.

Schiemedel himself frankly admits this. He says, "The resurrection of Jesus is held to be the central fact upon which the Christian church rests. Even at a date so early as that of I Cor. Paul treats it as such in an elaborate discussion (I Cor.

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15:1-26). In particular he rests it upon three fundamental thoughts of the Christian faith," these being that the death of Jesus was "a divine appointment for the forgiveness of sins," that it was "a vindication of the supremacy of the exalted Christ over the Church," and that it was "a pledge of the certainty of the resurrection of all believers to a life of everlasting blessedness." He then declares: "It seems accordingly in logic inevitable that if at any time it should come to be recognized that the resurrection of Jesus never happened, the Christian faith with respect to all the points just mentioned would necessarily come to an end." Really, all that he gets out of these "appearances" is confirmation of faith in the reign of God and in the immortality of the human soul, truths that have always existed in the world independently of the Christian revelation. The testimony of this ex-

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tremely radical and perfectly frank critic is most weighty on this point and his logic is inescapable. If it should come to pass in the future that belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ should be wholly and finally given up, as it was in the case of Apollonius of Tyana, then by gradual and inevitable logic the entire scheme of the Christian religion will be undermined, Christ will cease to be worshipped as the Saviour of the world but will sink to the level of a human prophet and go with Apollonius into oblivion, and Christianity will wither into an ethical cult and finally be blown about and blown away as another empty religious husk and dead leaf by the winds of the centuries. This is not only the logic of Schmiedel, it is also that of Paul: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain."

It is a characteristic of all these theories

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that they are attempts to escape from the supernatural nature of the resurrection as a violation of a closed and rigid system of physical laws, which, it is supposed, cannot be invaded and ruptured by such an event. But if we view nature, not as such a closed mechanical system, but as a living organism in which God is immanent, or as the mode of the divine activity, then physical laws are habits of the divine will and still subject to special divine purposes. On this view, miracles are such special acts and fall within the sweep of wider laws and higher ends. According to this principle, the resurrection of Christ violated no law but fulfilled a high spiritual purpose and was a supremely rational event.

The fundamental objection that lies against all these inadequate explanations is that they endeavor to account for the apostolic belief in the resurrection of

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Christ by utterly improbable and insufficient causes. That belief is a vast shadow flung out over all these Christian centuries. Only a majestic mountain could cast such a shadow. These inadequate explanations put petty little schemes or molehills behind the shadow: they are too small and insignificant to account for it. Some cause commensurate with the length and breadth of this shadow must be found back of it; and this cause can be nothing less or else than the actual resurrection of our Lord.

These attempted explanations exhaust the possibilities of the profoundest scholarship and the greatest geniuses in endeavoring to account for this event. They are shown to be inadequate, and some sceptical scholars admit this and frankly confess their inability to devise a theory for the event and they leave it unexplained. And therefore these incompetent theories are

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themselves a striking testimony to the fact that the only sufficient explanation of the apostolic belief in this event is that on the third day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The disciples believed this because it was true. The Wonderful Morning did not give birth to a cunningly devised fable or myth, and the colossal structure of Christianity is founded, not on a fiction, but on a fact.

XIII. The Significance of the Resurrection of Christ



THE resurrection of Christ was not a mere material wonder, but a spiritual achievement of supreme significance. The miracles of Jesus were never spectacular prodigies performed to create a sensation and draw a curious crowd, but

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were healing ministries and spiritual manifestations which were an essential part of his work of redemption and were the proper outflow and overflow of his divine personality. The resurrection was not simply one miracle more, but was the unique expression of his power and the crown that completed the cross.

I. A DEMONSTRATION OF DIVINITY

The resurrection of Christ was a visible demonstration of his divinity. We have already appealed to the divine person of Christ as a proof of his resurrection, and now we appeal to his resurrection as a proof of his divine person. This is not to reason in a circle; it is simply to let the two sides of the arch lean against and support each other. The act of coming forth from the tomb was an exercise of divinity transcending all the other miracles wrought by Jesus and is beyond delegated

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power. Only the Lord of life and Victor over death could unloose the bonds of the tomb and burst through its rocky jaws and come forth in the newness of life.

Paul in Romans 1:4 affirms that Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." The word translated "declared" is the Greek word from which is derived our word "horizon," and Paul says that Jesus by his resurrection was "horizoned" as the Son of God with power. The figure suggests that the resurrection encircles Christ as by a mountain horizon wall that hems him in with incontestable evidence and proof of his divine Sonship. In whatever direction we look from the empty tomb of the risen Lord we see him horizoned with divinity. There is no gap in the evidence that breaks or weakens the continuity of this proof. We are shut in to faith in his Sonship, and as long as this

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mountain rim surrounds him in an unbroken horizon, his divinity will stand demonstrated and secure. Believing in this central and unique miracle, we can believe in his divine person, and all his other miracles and works become normal and easy expressions of his power, mere leaves out of his life, sparks of his divine dynamic.

2. AN ESSENTIAL PART OF REDEMPTION

The resurrection of Christ is not only an evident proof of his divinity, but is itself a constituent factor in his redemption of the world. Other miracles of Jesus, such as his raising Lazarus from the dead, might not have been wrought, and this omission would not have affected the completeness and efficiency of his ministry and mission. But not so with his resurrection: the omission of this would have been disastrous to his whole plan and

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purpose, involving it in fatal defect and defeat.

Had there been no resurrection, Jesus would not have been manifested to his disciples and to the world as the risen and triumphant Conqueror of death and would have been numbered with the innumerable dead of earth who have passed into the dust of oblivion. The cross humiliated him even unto death and seemed to show that he was only one more of his human kind who had perished and vanished, but the resurrection at once lifted him out of this class: wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name.

The resurrection exalted Christ to heaven where he carries on his redemptive work on a worldwide scale. While he was on earth he was limited locally in his ministry, but from the right hand of God he sheds his Spirit universally over the world, as the

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sun spills its splendor over all continents and islands, and intimately works in the hearts of all men. It was expedient that he should go in order that the Spirit might come, and the resurrection was the step by which he passed from the lower and limited to this higher and universal field and means of redemption. He rose from the dead that he might transcend a mere local and parochial ministry and work everywhere by his Spirit in establishing the kingdom of God in the world.

More deeply and intimately still does the resurrection of Christ enter into his work of redemption. Paul alludes to no other miracle wrought by Jesus, but he made his resurrection a central foundational fact in his preaching, and in his Epistles he weaves it into the whole web and very fibre of the gospel. Christ rose for our justification and sanctification by uniting his Spirit with our spirits and

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applying to us and infusing into us the atoning virtue of his sacrifice and the renewing influence of his grace. Paul represents this spiritual resurrection of the believer through union with Christ as being "raised up with him, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6), and as knowing "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10), "according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph. 1:19-20). The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was thus the continuation of the resurrection of Christ, which is being renewed in us and is now advancing the kingdom of God in the hearts of believers and in the world, and will only reach its consummation when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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The resurrection of Christ is thus no mere evidential sign or unimportant appendage to his ministry, but it is an essential constituent part of his redemption which enters vitally into his work in the salvation of the world. The epochal significance of the rising of our Lord from the grave is that as "the first man Adam became a living soul," the fountain of the race, so "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. 15:45), the Founder and Head of a new redeemed humanity.

3. A PROOF OF IMMORTALITY

A third significance of the resurrection of Christ is that it is a positive proof of immortality. The arguments for the immortality of the human soul that have been urged by philosophy both Christian and pagan and that reached such forcible and beautiful expression in Plato, are concentrated into a blazing focus in the

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person of Christ. If that great Soul and white Spirit vanished in the night of death and left only a handful of dust under the Syrian stars, then we feel that we live in an irrational world which devours its noblest children and betrays all its promises. "Is God blowing soap-bubbles? Did he dip the pipe of his power in the suds of matter and blow the character of Jesus, that it might entertain him with its iridescence, burst to his satisfaction and be gone?" The human mind and heart will ever refuse to believe in such a wreck of reason and of hope.

But all these natural arguments for immortality fall short of demonstration and leave this great hope in the twilight. Christ brought life and immortality to light, out of the shadows of uncertainty into the full light of the Wonderful Morning. He did this first in his teaching. Ancient philosophers indulged in specula-

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tions and raised hopes as to the future life, but Christ made positive affirmations. He spoke as an eye-witness who had come from the other world and testified that he had seen. "In my Father's house," he said, "are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Jesus, knowing that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God." The passage between this world and the next was a familiar road to him. He spoke of the other world with the same certainty as he did of this world. Heaven was as sure to him as earth.

But Christ demonstrated immortality by the great proof and seal of his resurrection from the dead. He went through the dark portal of death on the cross into the

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other world and then came back through the door of his tomb, and thus he was literally a traveler from that bourne whence no other earthly pilgrim has ever himself returned. Out of that empty tomb gushed the light of the life immortal and the splendor of the eternal day. Believing in this fact we have faith in immortal life as certain as though we ourselves stood within the jeweled gates of the eternal city and by personal experience knew the Great Secret.

The resurrection of Christ not only proved his own immortality but also carries with it the resurrection to immortal life of all his followers. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming" (I Cor. 15:22-23). "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that

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raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11), "who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

This assures a resurrection of the body as well as the immortality of the soul. The future world is not a shadowy region of disembodied ghosts, but there we shall "be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (II Cor. 5:2-3). The nature of this resurrection body we cannot now know, for it lies beyond the range of our earthly experience. Christ's body as it was transfigured on the Mount and especially as it was mysteriously manifested after

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his resurrection may give us a glimpse and a hint of what it may be. Paul also describes it in phrases that struggle to convey to us some conception of this mystery. This mortal body "is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . . Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,

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and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the evolution of life the body keeps pace with the soul. Nature has been constantly lifting life from lower to higher types, from the microbe to the vertebrate, from the gill-breathing water animal to the lung-breathing air animal, and so on up to man. This line of ascent points on up to still higher forms, and therefore the heavenly body will correspond with the glorified soul. It may be endowed with new senses through which life will pour in upon us in new streams of knowledge and beauty. Our senses are so many windows

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opening out upon the world, and our present bodies are transparent or sensitive at only five points; but the spiritual body may be transparent through and through, clear as crystal, through which we can look out upon every aspect of the world and touch it with sensitive feelers at every point. It may also be armed with as yet unknown powers by which we can pass with incredible swiftness from place to place and even from world to world. We do not know what we shall be, but we may well believe that as the slow-crawling, shaggy caterpillar is to the swift-winged, gorgeously-arrayed butterfly, so is this present "muddy vesture of decay" to that glorified body with which we shall be clothed upon. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

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Our study is ended. The hour that witnessed the stone rolled away from the empty tomb of Christ and revealed the fact that he was risen, was indeed a Wonderful Morning, compared with which all other mornings of history, however splendid the days and events they have ushered in, pale into insignificance. This Fact is the historical Foundation of our Christian Faith. It was preceded by a long preparation and was thus built into the plan of the ages. It is attested by many infallible proofs, witnesses who are numerous, competent and trustworthy, whose narratives bear the inimitable marks of sincerity and truth. It first gave birth to scepticism in the hearts of the disciples as "an idle tale," and then suddenly inspired them with mighty faith that never again faltered, and finally they sealed their testimony with their blood. The Apostle Paul is a powerful witness for it. It is a

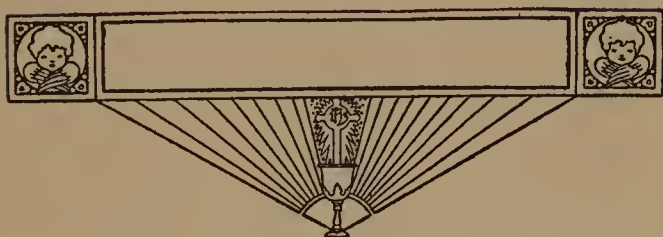
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fountain whence flows the Christian church and kingdom of God, which has become the Gulf Stream of history. The divine person of Christ matches and proves this epochal event, and the event equally proves his divine person. It is a great evidential sign that encircles Christ as with a horizon wall of proof, and it enters vitally into the whole fabric of the gospel and plan of redemption. It is a morning sun that dissipates the doubt and shadows of speculation and brings life and immortality to light. It fulfills all the dreams of men of a city that hath foundations, eternal in the heavens; it greatens our human life with immeasurable worth and grand hopes; it satisfies the infinite longings of the soul for more life, life that will be fuller, finer, richer, sweeter, life in which the severed affections of this transitory world will be restored, even life forevermore. The Wonderful Morning is

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the pledge and prelude of the Eternal
Day.

O precious cross! O glorious crown!
O resurrection day!
Ye angels, from the stars flash down,
And bear my soul away.



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A wonderful morning

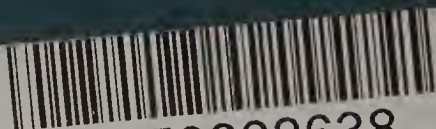
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